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Project Title: Coping with Pluralism in Ontario Education: A Review of Policies and Programs (Phase 1)

Investigator(s): Stacy Churchill and Isabel Kaprielian

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to review policies and programs in Ontario education which deal with "other ethnic groups", to use the terminology of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. This term refers to groups whose personal or family origins are other than Native Peoples, French or Anglo-Celtic.

The grouping of programs and policies reviewed included:

a. Multiculturalism programs
b. Heritage languages programs
c. Anti-racism programs
d. Special measures for refugees and recent immigrants
e. ESL programs
f. Human rights education
g. Textbook revision to eliminate bias or prejudice

The planned outcomes of the project were twofold: (a) the preparation of the manuscript of a report intended for educators, school trustees and interested members of the public and (b) one or more academic publications intended to explain eventual theoretical findings of the report. The methodology of the study is borrowed from cross-national studies of development of educational policies for linguistic minorities, carried out under the sponsorship of the OECD and coordinated by one of the principal investigators.

The manuscript of the short book prepared through this project is in a draft form that will be circulated to interested educators for feedback in the summer of 1989 in order to permit a revision prior to submission to a publisher. A major review of the conclusions of the Radwanski Report (Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts) was carried out as part of the study and will be published by Althouse Press in late 1989 as part of a book. An additional theoretical publication for academic audiences is planned in the coming year.

This project was funded by the Ministry of Education under its Block Transfer Grant to OISE.

Final Report (June 1989)

Coping with Pluralism in Ontario Education
A Review of Policies and Programs

Principal Investigators: **Stacy Churchill**
Isabel Kaprielian

Description of Activities

Purpose and planned outcomes of project

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Major activities

The project was intended to review policies at the provincial and board levels using a selected sample of school

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1 Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. The Education of Minority Groups. An enquiry into problems and practices of fifteen countries. OECD, Aldershott (U.K.): Gower, 1983. Stacy Churchill. The Education of Linguistic and Cultural Minorities in the OECD Countries. Multilingual Matters, 1986.

boards. After consultation, it was decided that more intensive work would be done on boards in the following urban areas: Metro Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Windsor.

The methodology used involves access to two major sources of information: (i) official and semi-official documents (e.g. internal board circulars, definitions of curriculum objectives etc.) and (ii) interviews with selected persons. Interviews were conducted with a wide range of individuals including current and former trustees, education officials and educators. All interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality. It should be noted that extensive time was made available to the investigators by Dr. Harry Fisher and by Mr. Duncan Green, both of whom played key roles in the developments under study.

A major problem involved in the study was to define an approach which made effective use of theoretical frameworks without giving up the main objective of writing a document that is understandable by informed laypersons. This involved several intensive sessions by the investigators in reviewing documentation and drawing up hypothetical lists of information needs of various categories of participants in the policy development and implementation process - including parents and members of affected ethnocultural communities. We found it possible to integrate some of the data by recourse to a theoretical model proposed by Raymond Breton and his associates in the early 1970's as a means of organizing the study of factors associated with the social impact of immigration.[2]

It became apparent after some months that the leadership role played by the Toronto Board of Education in the 1960's and early 1970's justified a focused effort to ensure that the investigators had an adequate "map" of the process of policy development. This sub-study involved, in addition to interviews, a review of relevant board minutes since 1960 as well as of a great number of printed reports. The effort spent on the Toronto Board of Education proved particularly useful in that it revealed an almost total (and indeed surprising) congruence between actual policy evolution and the events that would have been predicted by the theoretical model developed in the earlier OECD study. This validation of the theoretical model by case studies has been recommended by recent reviewers of the CERI project[3] and will serve as the basis of a journal article to be prepared during the coming year.

During the course of the study one particularly important issue emerged from recent events. A major provincial study,

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2 Breton, Armstrong and Kennedy 1974, pp. 14-16.

3 e.g. by D. Gorter in Language Culture and Curriculum (forthcoming).

the so-called Radwanski report,[4] made the claim that ethnicity was not a major cause of dropouts in Ontario. This contradicted in astounding fashion the testimony we had received from educators and from persons involved in ethnocultural communities (as well as their statements before the special committee of the Ontario Legistlature). With some trepidation we felt it necessary to undertake a full review of the matter. The Radwanski Report alone was insufficient basis for the review, so that we were obliged to consider the entire background of studies done for the report, in particular two large opinion polls. Our review is a full-length journal article, which is to be published in late 1989 by Althouse Press as part of a book on related issues.[5]

The manuscript of a bcok describing the policy evolution in analytical terms is to be ready in the second week of July, at which time it will be circulated to a limited number of persons for review. Following this, a final version will be submitted to OISE Press for consideration as a publication.

Major Findings and Conclusions

The project was primarily oriented towards the preparation of a publication useful for educators and interested laypersons, not in drawing formal conclusions. Nevertheless, the methodology of work was intended to permit conclusions to be drawn regarding the policy process. The bulk of these conclusions are articulated in the draft of the book. At this point, it would be useful to draw attention to certain key points:

1. The review of policy and program evolution, particularly in the Toronto Board of Education confirmed the robustness of the basis theoretical model of development phases for policies presented in earlier work.

2. With respect to the long-term relevance of the study as a whole, we conclude that major educational challenges from immigration face all urban centres - including Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Windsor - and are progressively becoming obvious in much smaller settings including smaller rural communities. In raw population numbers and considering only the urban centres, the areas affected by concentrated large scale immigration in the last two decades contain more than half of the province's total population.

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4 George Radwanski, Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts. Toronto: Ministry of Education Ontario, 1987.

5 Stacy Churchill and Isabel Kaprielian. *Ethnicity, Language and School Retention in Ontario: The Unfinished Agenda* (forthcoming).

3. With respect to the Radwanski Report, we concluded: "Neither [background] survey included sufficient numbers of individuals from any ethnocultural group other than Anglo-Celtic and French to draw ANY conclusion whatsoever about the relationship between ethnicity and dropping out, much less to determine causal relationships related to ethnicity... Radwanski draws generally erroneous conclusions about ethnocultural matters based upon inadequate research studies unsuited to deal with these issues. In the process he ignores serious educational problems which affect ethnocultural groups. Contrary to his affirmation, these issues are relevant to education on a province-wide basis and, furthermore, are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future."

Annexes:

1. Draft of article: Stacy Churchill and Isabel Kaprielian.*Ethnicity, Language and School Retention in Ontario: The Unfinished Agenda* (forthcoming).

2. **To be submitted** in second week of July: Draft of report intended for publication. Working title: The Not-so-Newcomers.

DRAFT ONLY

Ethnicity, Language and School Retention in Ontario: The Unfinished Agenda

by

Stacy Churchill and Isabel Kaprielian

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

The Radwanski Report[1] is a policy study intended to deal with the entire problem of dropouts in Ontario schools. Its recommendations have caught the public imagination more than any education policy report in recent years. Its main strength is that it is written by a person from outside the field of education who looks at long-standing problems. As an outsider, Radwanski has credibility and has aroused strong interest from the media and the public at large. But this strength is also a weakness. No matter how committed to fairness, reformers from outside often dismiss criticism from educators as self-serving and overlook important pieces of wisdom that would strengthen their own proposals. Radwanski is no exception. Thus some of his less valuable criticisms of education have received far too favourable a treatment by politicians and the popular media. Objections from educators have often been seen as proof that Radwanski is right on all points: the more bitter the medicine, the better it is supposed to be for the patient. Conversely, many of his recommendations are worthwhile and deserve better treatment than they have received from the educational and educational research establishments. In short, the report is neither all bad nor all good.

This paper addresses the implications of the Radwanski Report for groups whose origins are outside the so-called mainstream of Ontario society --- persons whose family background is not "Anglo-Celtic", to use a term borrowed from Statistics Canada. This includes Franco-Ontarians, Native Peoples and Métis, and a host of immigrants and descendents of immigrants. Because the Radwanski Report cuts across almost all aspects of education, we shall deal with only the most salient aspects of its incidence on ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities.[2]

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1 George Radwanski, Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts. Toronto: Ministry of Education Ontario, 1987.

2 We shall generally use the term "ethnocultural" to refer to groups who are distinguished from English-speaking persons of Anglo-Celtic origin by any of the related factors of linguistic, ethnic or cultural difference resulting from family background. We refer to the grouping of factors as "ethnicity".

In general, our reaction is nuanced. On the one hand, we believe that Radwanski is right in treating much of the current dropout phenomenon as a preventible social evil caused in part by factors deriving from schooling; many of the proposed measures for dealing with the problem should directly benefit ethnocultural minorities. On the other hand, the report contains serious shortcomings. In the following we argue that:

(a) Radwanski bases his discussion of ethnicity on research studies which are inappropriately designed and cannot be used reliably to support the conclusions drawn.
(b) Radwanski overlooks specific problems of immigrants, visible minorities, Native Peoples and Franco-Ontarians,[1] and fails to recognize the role of schooling in dealing with such problems.
(c) Radwanski makes far-reaching policy recommendations, some of which could be of direct benefit to ethnocultural groups, but the recommendations are flawed: he neglects to deal with several matters related to ethnicity, language and culture, which, if left unattended, could sabotage the main intent of the reforms he proposes.

Radwanski and ethnocultural groups: a summary

For persons who are concerned to know how Radwanski treats the problems of linguistic and ethnocultural minorities in the educational system, it is singularly difficult to come to grips with his report. The implications for minorities are nowhere explicit and must be derived by analysis from the text. In this respect, we shall distinguish between two aspects of the report: (a) what Radwanski says about the role of ethnocultural background as a factor contributing to the dropout problem and (b) the recommendations made for increasing retention.

Ethnic background (pp. 81-83), one of several items used to describe "Who Drops Out" (pp. 71-85), is considered relatively unimportant:

> Canadian-born students, in fact, appear slightly more likely to drop out than those born abroad. In both surveys done for this study, a smaller proportion of non-dropouts were born in Canada - 83 per cent in the Goldfarb study, and 88 per cent in the Decima research. (p.82)
> While neither ethnicity nor factors related to immigration appear to be key components of the dropout problem province-wide, it is important to note that they may be more significant in Metro Toronto, where there tends to be the largest concentration of recent immigrants.(p.82)
> Even in Toronto, however, the most important factor in this regard appears to be recentness of arrival rather than country of origin.(p. 82)

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1 Ontarians of French mother tongue.

> ...we are still far from optimally successful in meeting the linguistic, educational and/or cultural adjustment needs of older immigrant students who are plunged directly into our high schools. (p.83)

Radwanski's analysis is based mainly on the two surveys carried out by Decima Research and Goldfarb Consultants.[1] The discussion implies that ethnicity and immigration play a small role in causing dropouts except for a few older immigrant students in the Toronto area. This conclusion is confirmed in the section on "Causes of Dropping Out" (pp. 86-99), a summary of the reasons cited by respondents in the two surveys as the causes of their dropping out. Ethnicity is not mentioned.

The report places the brunt of the blame for dropouts on the failure of the school system to deal adequately with the needs of students from lower socio-economic groups. The main facet of schooling blamed for this failure is the streaming of poorer and less advantaged high school students into "basic" or "general" classes, rather than into "advanced" classes.[2]

Out of the many recommendations made in the report, the following appear to us to have the greatest implications for ethnocultural minorities: (a) the *elimination of streaming* and its replacement by "a single and undifferentiated high-quality educational stream for all students" (p.163); (b) replacing the credit system with *a common program* of learning "in the essential content areas for all students, with no optional courses in Grades 9 and 10, and with only a limited number of optional courses to the degree consistent with successful learning outcomes in the essential content areas in Grades 11 and 12" (p. 173) --- which means, in practical terms, postponing streaming until grade 11 and reducing its scope; (c) introducing *standardized province-wide testing* which is to be "primarily diagnostic in purpose" (pp. 146-7); (d) *abolishing vocational programs* in high schools (159-61, 163); (e) adopting teaching systems based upon *mastery learning* in the elementary schools (p. 142); (f) providing universally available *early childhood education* for children from the age of 3 (p. 126).

The recommendations are notable for the absence of suggestions that the school curriculum should be adapted to the particular needs of any ethnocultural group. The French-language school system serving Franco-Ontarians is mentioned only indirectly. This occurs in two headings of sections discussing what should be the content of schooling: "English (or French in the francophone schools)" (p. 41) and "French (or English in the francophone schools)" (p. 49). The words "racism" and "multicultural"

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1 Sullivan 1988 and Karp 1988, referred to in the text below as the Decima report and the Goldfarb report.

2 Ontario high schools are organized on a credit system in which key subjects are offered at three levels of difficulty: basic, general or advanced.

appear on only one page (p. 38): "education about multiculturalism (sic) and about racism" is one of several topics which, the report says, have been transferred from the family and the community to the school. The passage argues against keeping them in the curriculum. The report's only mention of Heritage Languages is in a quotation on the same page:

> "I personally think that unrealistic expectations are being placed on the system. There's no coherent framework for them... When you make so many things separate compulsory courses, you end up saying, 'Okay you guys - we've got 15 minutes on AIDS; then by the way, we've got to do French, so the nation will hold together; then we've got this optional bit of heritage language - how many are staying for that?' So that the school day, in order to accommodate all these specifics, just gets littered with stuff. So there's a sense in which the curriculum gets warped, bent, has to accommodate too many subjects or too much content or too many issues." (p.38)

Radwanski uses this to buttress his arguments about what should not be in the school curriculum. The choice of AIDS, French and heritage languages as examples of "clutter" in the curriculum is rather unfortunate, coming as it does from an assisant deputy minister of education. Other important words not used in the report include: "ESL" or "English as a Second Language", "Franco-Ontarian", "Native Peoples", "Blacks", "visible minority", and "discrimination".

The Surveys

The shortcomings of Radwanski's analysis of the link between ethnicity and dropping out derive from the data sources used. His conclusions on this point are based almost entirely on two surveys carried out by Decima Research and Goldfarb Consultants[1]. Both are based upon telephone interviews of the type used mainly for marketing research and political opinion polling; the Goldfarb report is supplemented by group interviews with dropouts and individual interviews with a number of educators.

The published Decima report is a bare summary of the main tables with very little discussion of sampling; it requires to be supplemented by reference to the original full tabulation and analysis presented to the Radwanski Commission, available for consultation in the Ministry of Education.[2] The Goldfarb report is much longer (223 pp.

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1 Respectively, Sullivan 1988 and Karp 1988. Radwanski cites other research, some of it dated, but the main arguments derive from the two surveys.

2 Available from the Ministry of Education.

plus appendices vs. 68 pp.); unfortunately more detailed tabulations were not available to permit further exploration of the data. Both surveys include items which focus on ethnocultural origin or immigration, the Goldfarb study being more thorough in this respect.[1]

The available sources do not indicate if the researchers were asked to provide data that would permit drawing conclusions about the relationship between ethnicity and dropping out. The shortcomings of the surveys as a basis for studying this relationship are too numerous to analyse in more than rough outline. In our view, neither study can be reliably used to support Radwanski's conclusions on this topic. The Decima study includes a special subsample of Franco-Ontarians and purports to present comparative information on the causes of their dropping out. We shall begin with the discussion of the treatment of Franco-Ontarians in the Decima report, then deal with more general issues raised by both reports: (a) the telephone survey methodology, (b) the nature of the samples drawn, and (c) the data and its analysis.

Franco-Ontarians and the Decima Report

The Decima report presents comparative data for non-francophones (called "Ontario-Wide" data) and Franco-Ontarians. Therefore it can be fairly viewed as an attempt to find factors related at least to differences between non-francophones and francophones. Unfortunately, this promise is not realized. The response data show a number of potentially significant differences between Franco-Ontarians and the remainder of the population. But, in the absence of any hypotheses about why these discrepancies occur, they are left unexplained. Some of them are probably linked to specific problems of Franco-Ontarians in relationship to schooling, e.g. to a linguistic or "ethnic background" problem. To cite one example passed over in the study almost without commentary, 46 per cent of Franco-Ontarians rate difficulty with learning as an important factor in leaving school as compared to only 30 per cent of non-francophones.[2] In other words, proportionately 53 per cent more francophones than non-francophones (46 / 30= 1.53) report learning difficulties. This is a wide margin of difference for a study involving some 1400 respondents. With knowledgeable analysis using other sources to

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1 Goldfarb includes items on: birth in Canada or outside (9a), birth of at least one parent in Canada (9b), mother tongue (10a), language used in the home (10b), religious affiliation (11) and "nationality or religious backgrounds" of ancestors (12). In addition to the breakdown bertween francophone and non-francophone respondents, the Decima study gathered data on "main ancestry or ethnic group" (items 22 and 47 in unpublished tabulations) and birth in Canada or outside Canada (items 23 and 48).

2 Sullivan 1988, p.33-34. cf. Table 20, p. 33: "Had trouble coping with material had to learn" rated 'very important' or 'somewhat important' as a causal factor in leaving school. The report calls non-Francophones "Ontario residents" to distinguish them from francophones... who also reside in the province!

develop hypotheses and to provide supplementary explanations, the data might have yielded important insights into educational problems affecting Franco-Ontarians.

The Decima sample of Franco-Ontarians consisted solely of those in eastern and northern Ontario (boundaries undefined both in the published and in the unpublished materials).[1] This means the survey sampled only the groups of Franco-Ontarians who are most concentrated, suffer least from assimilation and generally have access to a broad range of school services available in French. But it excludes the Franco-Ontarians in other parts of the province who, on the basis of published research, are (a) most subject to assimilation, (b) most likely to be in mixed French-English schools or other unfavourable school environments, and (c) most likely to encounter learning difficulties related to language.[2] Depending upon the boundaries of the Decima sample, this leaves out from 35 to 50 per cent of the Franco-Ontarian population. The excluded Franco-Ontarians are those who are most likely to be affected by linguistic assimilation and the poor quality of educational services in French, which in turn results in higher dropout rates. The sample design therefore eliminated the population most likely to show a link between ethnicity and dropping out. In addition, not one item in the interview dealt with language problems, thus eliminating from discussion the most important educational problem faced by Franco-Ontarians. The item cited above concerning the difficulty of school subjects might well be a clue to the relevance of this problem to dropping out --- even if the responses come from Franco-Ontarians in areas least affected by assimilation.

The Decima study has other more important shortcomings as a basis for studying the links between school retention and the linguistic and ethnocultural background of dropouts, most of which are shared with the Goldfarb report. The Decima report does contain, however, an important qualification: "The lack of an impact of immigration and ethnicity on the likelihood of being a dropout must, however, be considered a tentative finding. In order to definitively draw these conclusions, we would need to undertake a sample that would not set quotas for dropouts."[3] As we shall see, much more would be required.

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1 The sample was drawn by another company from only two regions. However in the data reported on p. 4 one finds that 3 per cent of the tabulated sample of non drop-outs come from other regions: presumably these were in the non-francophone (Ontario-wide) sample, interviewed in English and then reported as part of the Franco-Ontarian group. No such percentages appear for dropouts in the table. These discrepancies from the original sample are nowhere explained.

2 Churchill, Frenette, and Quazi. 1986; cf. particularly discussion of mixed high schools in vol. 1.

3 Sullivan 1988, p. 8.

Telephone survey methodology

Both survey firms use telephone interview techniques, which are particularly weak as a means of reaching the persons in our society who are at the bottom of the social scale. They depend upon two factors: (a) willingness to talk to strangers and (b) credit rating. In any telephone interview situation, a crucial variable is obtaining cooperation from the respondents. Ask anyone who has done door-to-door election canvassing in an "ethnic" riding in Toronto: there is a strong correlation between opening of doors and knowledge of English. What happens when a telephone interviewer asks for cooperation in a survey? Response is inversely correlated with language ability. Even if the dropout speaks English (or French) adequately, one still has to get past the "screen" of other family members who answer the telephone. The more "marginal" the family from which the dropout comes, the more likely that suspicion of strangers is high and the greater the need for personal, direct contact to obtain even a minimum of information.

To be sampled in a telephone interview, the respondent must have access to a telephone within the same household. Simple things like a good credit rating with Bell Canada are a prerequisite to having a telephone, and one must remember that the highest rates of unemployment in any given district are concentrated among young high school dropouts, who are the main target group of both surveys. How many families suffering from chronic unemployment have their own telephone? True enough, poor credit ratings and chronic unemployment are not a monopoly of any ethnocultural group. But how good would a telephone sample be in reaching families of persons of Native American Indian or Métis descent in areas of high unemployment? Among immigrants is not unemployment often correlated with inadequate knowledge of English, particularly for those who have the lowest levels of educational background in their native countries? The telephone sampling methodology excludes the most marginal groups, that is the groups for whom ethnicity is likely to be the greatest obstacle to educational opportunity.

Samples drawn

The proof of a sample is in the results. The Goldfarb study sampled 900 dropouts and "drop-backs" and 100 high school graduates. It publishes only the ethnic breakdown of those identified as dropouts (843 respondents). For unspecified reasons, francophones are oversampled by a factor of 280 per cent (13 per cent by mother tongue[1]

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1 Census figures indicate that about 4.7 per cent of the Ontario population have French as a mother tongue.

and 18 per cent by ethnic identification as a proportion of the dropouts included in the survey)[1]; language used by interviewers is not mentioned, and only English-language interview schedules are published. In any case, tabulations of the Franco-Ontarian data are not provided nor are they put to use for purposes of comparison. The only comparative data related to background deal with the country of birth of respondents and their parents. Both sets of data are used to suggest that youngsters born or having one parent born in Canada are more likely to drop out than those born or having both parents born outside Canada.[2] Basing any generalization on the figures presented is unjustified, given the very small sample size of graduates and the distortions in the sample drawn (discussed below).[3]

Both surveys have data on ethnic background. The Goldfarb study publishes only the ethnic breakdown of dropouts, without corresponding data for the 100 persons in the sample of graduates. In a province where persons of Germanic descent are the largest non-French, non-Anglo-Celtic group identified in censuses up to 1971 (when census methodologies were changed), Germanic ethnic background is reported by only 4 per cent of the dropouts; the comparatively minute group of Dutch descent are reported at 2 per cent. Portuguese and West Indian dropouts were too few to be tabulated; this may be reassuring to those who believe these groups have few ethnically-related educational problems but is unlikely to convince the Portuguese and West Indians that the study can be used to assess their educational needs. Clearly the adequacy of the sampling techniques for the dropouts is dubious in the extreme: how could the sample be random and representative when it includes these anomalies? Drawing a sample with proportionately 2.8 times as many francophones as are revealed by the census should, alone, be sufficient cause to reject the study as a basis for drawing conclusions about ethnicity. Unless Goldfarb drew but failed to report a totally different francophone sample similar to the one done by Decima, these figures mean that areas of high francophone concentration were generally oversampled --- i.e. a disproportionate weight

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1 Kapp 1988 p. 68.

2 Radwanski uses the data correctly in his text (p.82), even though the report contains an editorial error. It reads: "Ninety-two per cent of dropouts were born in Canada, 83 per cent of graduates....The data indicate that graduates are slightly *more* likely than dropouts to have parents born in Canada."[2] [*emphasis added*] The table on birthplace of parents shows that the second statement is incorrectly worded and, to be consistent with the table, should read: "...graduates are slightly *less* likely than dropouts to have parents born in Canada." In answer to the question "Were either of your parents born in Canada?" 38 per cent of graduates responded "no" as compared to only 20 per cent of dropouts.

3 If this were a representative sample, then it would imply that 38 per cent of all Ontario high school graduates in the relevant age groups (24 years or under) were children of families with both parents born abroad. Such a figure appears unusually high for the province as a whole.

was given to eastern and possibly northern Ontario by comparison with other areas, such as Metropolitan Toronto. This is sheer speculation, however, which should be rendered unnecessary by publishing adequate data on sampling procedures. In the absence of such information, we must conclude that the sample is biased and unusable for drawing conclusions about ethnicity. But, even if the dropout sample were a true reflection of the Ontario population, the data could not be used to draw conclusions on ethnicity because one does not have corresponding data from a sample of graduates many times larger than the one done for the study.

The published Decima report does not show breakdowns by ethnicity. The unpublished tabulations of the item asking for "your main ancestry or ethnic group" are hard to interpret, since the categories of reporting are: British, Ireland (sic), French/French Canadian, Mediterranean, Northern European, Eastern European, Asian and Other. The Decima commentary on these matters is restrained. "Ethnic background is also not strongly associated with dropping out," the author reports, following it with the cautionary note mentioned earlier that this is a tentative finding. On the other hand, using data on place of birth of dropouts and non-dropouts, it comes to the conclusion that "coming to Canada as a child or during school years is not strongly associated with dropping out. In all, 10 per cent of those who dropped out say they were born outside of Canada; nevertheless 12 per cent of non dropouts were also born outside of Canada."[1]

The data and the analysis

Since both reports comment on the relationship between immigration and school retention, we may legitimately inquire whether this is the right question to ask in the data analysis. In our view, it is the wrong question. If one group of recent immigrants --- for example from Hong Kong --- had large numbers of parents who were of high educational and/or socio-economic background by comparison with another coming from an area with a poorly developed educational infrastructure --- such as the Açores ---, it would be manifestly absurd to group the two together and suggest that immigrants as a class have no problems. Similarly it would be flying in the face of all known evidence to suggest that Native Peoples have no ethnically related educational problems just because, on average, persons born in Ontario do not have a disproportionately high dropout rate compared to other jurisdictions. Comparing children of all native-born Canadians with those of all recent immigrants is nothing more than a device to produce figures from data

1 Sullivan 1988, p. 7.

without concern for their meaning or validity for addressing eduational problems. This is what both reports do, and Radwanski has accepted this at face value, failing to include the qualifying remarks made by the authors of the survey research reports.

A more fundamental problem is involved. The numbers of persons in a given category sampled in survey research determines what conclusions can be drawn about persons in the category. If one converts the percentages used in the ethnic breakdowns of the two studies into numbers of respondents, it becomes clear that the numbers involved from any particular ethnic group other than Anglo-Celtic or Franco-Ontarian are quite small. Using the Goldfarb data and assuming a 100 per cent response rate to the question on ethnicity (which maximizes the possible number of respondents for each category), one can calculate rough figures for the different groups: the largest group sampled (other than Anglo-Celtic and Franco-Ontarian) is Italian with 51 respondents (6 per cent of 843). This is followed by German at 34, Jewish at 25, Dutch and North American Indian at 17; all other separately tabulated groups have about 8 respondents (1 per cent). It is possible that a properly drawn random sample including 25 dropouts from a given group would provide data with a minimum degree of reliability for drawing certain types of conclusions but this would have required a MUCH larger total sample to get a comparable group of non-dropouts. **In fact, neither survey included sufficient numbers of individuals from any ethnocultural group other than Anglo-Celtic and French to draw ANY conclusion whatsoever about the relationship between ethnicity and dropping out, much less to determine causal relationships related to ethnicity.**

The final issue to be addressed is the content of the survey questions. In general, none of the questions in either survey was phrased in a way that would be likely to cause dropouts to mention ethnicity-related factors as a cause of their dropping out. Indeed our own experience in various studies suggests that, except for groups where there is widespread awareness of racially or ethnically based prejudice --- such as is the case for Native Peoples, Blacks and East Indians in Ontario ---, it is unlikely that students will go beyond their personal perceptions of difficulties in school to discern technical reasons which cause the educational system to operates in a way prejudicial to members of their ethnic group. To illustrate how students react, we need only turn to the Radwanski Report itself. The author places the major blame on streaming in high schools for causing dropouts. But if we turn to the two surveys, we note that streaming is not

mentioned by dropouts as a cause for their leaving school.[1] In order for the surveys to have probed this, it would have been necessary to develop highly refined and sensitive items that brought out the necessary information without biasing the responses. In fact, both surveys more or less ignored these issues.

The Goldfarb study merits further remarks. In addition to the telephone survey, it includes a different methodology based on group interviews and interviews with key educators and "experts". The report deals sensitively with ethnic issues. While acknowledging that the quantitative survey methodology and discussions with dropouts did not highlight ethnic issues, the author points out that it was an "important aspect of discussions with educators". She follows this with recommendations intended to increase school relevancy for visible minorities and Native students; she even suggests adopting from the experience of Native Peoples some of their traditional ways of pairing learners with adult mentors as a method of improving learning for all categories of learners.[2] Conversely, the issue of language for Franco-Ontarians is downplayed, on the basis of interview data which suggested that "dropping out among the French is less driven by language or culture and more driven by geographical and economic realities related to place of residence".[3] The context of the interview question which drew this response is uncertain, but it is highly unlikely that an expert involved in reviewing issues of dropouts among Franco-Ontarians could have been unaware of the systemic factors contributing to the problem and which have a differential incidence on Franco-Ontarians. In short, the Goldfarb study includes certain information which attenuate the findings of the telephone survey data and raised various ethnocultural issues, particularly as they relate to immigrants and Native Peoples. Both studies, however, were sadly lacking in their treatment of special problems of Franco-Ontarians.

In summary, we hold the position that the two telephone surveys on which Radwanski bases his conclusions regarding ethnocultural issues have serious shortcomings:

- -The surveys do not contain questions that would reveal differential educational problems linking ethnic origin with dropping out.
- -The surveys use methods that tend to exclude responses from marginal ethnocultural respondents, which might reveal differential impact of ethnicity.

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1 In mixed French-English high schools weak programming in French combined with social factors tend to stream Franco-Ontarians into less academic programs than non-Francophone students, but few of the students or even their parents are aware of this phenomenon. Churchill, Frenette and Quazi, vol. I, 1986. See the discussion of mixed schools particularly pp. 291-99.

2 Kapp 1988, pp. 26-27, 45-46.

3 Kapp 1988, p. 31.

-The sample drawn of Franco-Ontarians in the Decima survey excludes the Franco-Ontarians most likely to be affected by language-related problems.
-Both surveys use samples which make it impossible to draw reliable conclusions about the relation between ethnicity and dropping out.
-Both surveys make inappropriate comparisons between children of native-born Canadians and children of recent immigrants, without considering the major differences in school performance of ethnic sub-groups within each category.

Radwanski's use of the surveys

Radwanski is, of course, responsible for the use he has made of the studies. Basing his analysis primarily on the survey results examined above, he concludes that "neither ethnicity nor factors related to immigration appear to be key components of the dropout problem province-wide...they may be more significant in Metro Toronto, where there tends to be the largest concentration of recent immigrants."(p.82) His discussion of dropping out cites several American studies but strangely fails to mention that those studies are conducted in the context of an educational system where there is an overwhelming relationship between school performance and ethnicity affecting particularly U.S. Blacks and Hispanics. He has also disregarded the qualitative results of the Goldfarb study based on the views of educators who accord importance to ethnicity-related phenomena. Instead he has generally given greater emphasis to the quantitative survey results. Our analysis has shown, however, that these studies cannot be used to substantiate Radwanski's conclusions.

Factors Not Considered

It might be useful to draw up a brief balance sheet of factors overlooked in the Radwanski Report which have an important bearing on the dropout problem.

Streaming and ethnocultural background. The report notes accurately that streaming is a major factor contributing to dropping out and then bases some of its most important recommendations on the acknowledged links between streaming and socio-economic status of students. This is fine as far as it goes, but it fails to address the issue of links between streaming and ethnic background, even though various minority groups view streaming as being discriminatory against them. Even if such streaming is not deliberately based on ethnocultural factors, the report should have examined at least the generally acknowledged links between family socio-economic status, ethnicity and streaming.

Non-intentional bias and racism in the curriculum. The report's discussion of curriculum options for schools completely skirts the issue of adapting the curriculum to combat non-intentional bias and racism. It could have acknowledged important gains made in improving the curriculum, such as eliminating various forms of bias from textbooks, while identifying areas where further improvement is necessary. In his discussion of the curriculum, Radwanski says that "we need to ask what the schools are uniquely equipped to teach, and what can be handled to one degree or another by the family and by other agencies in the community." (p. 39) Instead, Radwanski regrets that "education about racism" has been shifted from the home and community to the school and implies that it can be shifted back. One is hard-pressed to know how one can leave to the family and the community the task of providing children with insights into the racism and prejudice that characterize societal attitudes and behaviours. Education related to the elimination of prejudice and racism appears to us to meet Radwanski's criterion for inclusion in the curriculum, i.e. what schools are uniquely equipped to teach. It is also consistent with the citizenship training which he feels should be provided by the schools. Failing to deal with these issues does not remove them from the agenda. It is simply confusing, especially to those minorities who perceive their ethnicity as an obstacle to their children's performance in school.

Special language needs. In many public discussions, Heritage Language programs have been defended largely in terms of the need for closer relationships between children and their parents' heritage. However substantial research suggests that for children whose home language is not the language of the school, learning the home language can be an important "bridge" to school success because it can be the medium for promoting cognitive development at a time when the second language is insufficiently developed to permit this.[1] As noted above, Radwanski relegates Heritage Language instruction to the list of items that "clutter" the curriculum and excludes any mention of it from the common curriculum he proposes for schools.(p.38) He also indulges in a simplistic and one-sided discussion of a highly complex problem, use of "non-standard" English, which he equates with "ungrammatical, imprecise or mispelled" English.(pp. 41-42) It would have been important to acknowledge dialectical differences, given that many immigrant students come from English-speaking countries outside the mainly 'White' Commonwealth. This should have been done in the context of the discussion of streaming in order to raise an important issue: do students who speak a correct but non-standard dialect (a) receive generally lower grades based on failure to appreciate their oral

1 Cummins 1983 for a review of relevant research literature in Canada.

contributions in class and (b) receive incorrect advice to follow non-academic study streams because teachers and counsellors are misled by lower grades or misconceptions which equate non-standard English with poor intelligence?

Needs of Native Peoples. It is extraordinary that the Radwanski Report does not contain any detailed discussion of dropouts among Native children. The problem is so well known that it would have merited the commissioning of a short study, even at the price of diverting some funds from the two large surveys analysed earlier. An analysis provided by one county board of education on the retention rates of Native and non-Native students in two high schools is illustrative of the type of data that should have been presented by Radwanski. (The authors found the study in files gathered in the Ministry of Education as background for current reviews of the dropout problem). Studying retention rates between September and April of each school year for six years, the board report noted a difference between native and non-native retention rates but inexplicably stated that "the existence of trends has not been entirely clear...perhaps a separation by program phase (4-year vs. 5-year) would present greater disparities than is presently apparent between native and non-native students." Our review of the same data arrives at the opposite conclusion. The trends may not have been "clear" to the school board authorities, but the data show that natives dropped out at a rate three times greater than the non-Natives for the six-year period! [1] A recent press clipping reports a 30 per cent annual dropout rate for Native students in a high school in Timmins, a figure attributed to "severe racism" by the Northern Ontario manager for the Ontario Human Rights Commision.[2] It is difficult to understand how Radwanski does not give greater prominence to one of the most urgent problems facing Ontario education and fails to mention that children of Native ancestry are the group most affected by dropping out.

Needs of Franco-Ontarians. Published studies indicate that Franco-Ontarians have educational problems directly related to their ethnocultural status and their treatment within the educational system. One aspect of this is streaming of Franco-Ontarians in mixed high schools, reported regularly in research since the 1960's. Another is the issue of language-related impediments to successful school performance, linked in part to

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1 The board is located in southwest Ontario. Since the report was not prepared or intended for publication, we refrain from reporting the name of the board. The retention rates in two schools were as follows: School A: non-Native 95.16 per cent, Native 87.33 per cent; School B: non-Native 93.5 per cent, Native 80.16 per cent. The study failed to note a trend. However if the retention rates are converted to dropout rates the figures take on a different complexion. School A: non-Native 4.84 per cent, Native 12.67 per cent; School B: non-Native 6.50 per cent, Native 19.84 per cent. These are annual dropout rates and do not include dropouts of those who fail to return after the summer break.

2 Daily Press (Timmins), July 29, 1987.

failure to provide adequate levels of educational services in French in some parts of the province.[1] Radwanski fails to mention special problems of Franco-Ontarians.

Acknowledging the cultural contribution of non-English speaking peoples. Radwanski provides a curious contradiction in his prescriptions for a common curriculum. He strongly defends the need for better teaching of French as a second language (in English-language schools) and he tempers his defense of study of Canadian history with a call for an understanding of an increasingly interdependent world through study of world history and world geography (pp. 46-7, 49-50). But his discussion of literature refers only to "the richness and the power of the English literary tradition". It is a curious lapse not to have mentioned Dante as well as Shelley, Goethe as well as Coleridge, Tolstoy as well as Hemingway. He lists a group of English authors and says that not to have read and experienced their works is to "wander out into the world a cultural illiterate". (p.44) (This may come as a great shock to the inhabitants of all countries where English is not the medium of instruction and English literature is not part of the curriculum.) We are not contesting the role of the traditional English literature curriculum in secondary schools, but we do question the wisdom of describing an obligatory common curriculum in terms which fail to acknowledge any other literary tradition.

If one reviews this list of major areas not adequately dealt with in the Radwanski Report, they all clearly relate to the needs of different ethnocultural communities. In our opinion, an Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts cannot be considered minimally adequate unless it addresses directly the needs of ethnocultural communities.

Let us return to Radwanski's words, that factors related to ethnicity and immigration are not "key components of the dropout problem province-wide" but "may be more significant in Metro Toronto, where there tends to be the largest concentration of recent immigrants". First, we question whether a problem can be important in Toronto but not be important "province-wide". According to the most recent census, Toronto and its immediately surrounding urban areas had a combined population of approximately 3,427,000 persons in 1986. Secondly the study overlooks Franco-Ontarians and Native Peoples, whose numbers may be estimated, respectively, at 425,000 and 85,000. Since

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1 Churchill et al. 1976; Churchill, Frenette and Quazi Vol. 1, 1986. Both include detailed analyses and references to related research.

most Franco-Ontarians and Native Peoples live outside Metropolitan Toronto, the report can be said not to have dealt with problems affecting the schools serving slightly less than 4 million persons, at a minimum.

Radwanski's generalization that immigration-related factors are mainly a concern of Toronto should be seriously questioned. Comparatively large numbers of immigrants also find their way to several other urban centres such as Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor and Sudbury, as well as a host of smaller communities particularly in southern Ontario. The problems of immigrants do not cease to exist if they settle outside Toronto. Even if the total numbers of immigrants are small compared to Toronto, they are not small in the respective communities, which should also be included among those potentially affected by immigration-related factors. These rough calculations imply that the Radwanski Report overlooks or avoids dealing with ethnocultural issues affecting schools serving well over half the population of the province. Moreover, this is not a passing problem. Continued large-scale immigration is likely to continue for the foreseeable future; without immigration, Canada would already be in a position of net population decline due to falling birth rates and emigration. The implications for Ontario are particularly clear. Close to 50 per cent of all new immigrants to Canada settle in Ontario (roughly 40 per cent in Toronto). Taking the most recently decided immigration quotas for 1989 (160,000) and projecting the implications of continuing this for 10 years, one arrives at a ballpark figure of 1,600,000 immigrants to Canada in the next ten years of whom 800,000 might settle in Ontario. Since the immigration flows come mainly from non-European countries, the long-term implication is that special concerns of immigrants and interracial relations should be major aspects of all planning for education in the province.

Strengths and weaknesses of Radwanski's recommendations

Having undervalued and ignored ethnocultural issues in his report, Radwanski makes, nevertheless, a large number of recommendations which should be of benefit to ethnocultural minorities who are shortchanged by the educational system. The recommendations we consider most important are listed earlier: elimination of streaming, adoption of a common program of studies for all students, standardized province-wide testing, abolishing vocational programs, use of mastery learning and providing early childhood education.

The most important and potentially the most beneficial of the recommendations is the elimination or, more precisely, the postponing of streaming. Radwanski's recommendation in this respect is based upon the evidence that streaming is related mainly to socio-economic status of students with no reference to their ethnicity. We believe that certain ethnocultural groups are adversely affected by streaming, some for reasons related to lower socio-economic status, others for reasons that may be directly related to ethnic origin. But, whatever the cause, we concur in the recommendation to postpone streaming. It is likely to be a positive measure that will reduce dropouts among the ethnocultural groups who are differentially affected by streaming. De-streaming also implies the abolition or de-emphasis of vocational programs. Although vocational programs are often popular with some parts of the public, their effectiveness is very dubious; the arguments brought forward against them in the report are well substantiated.

A related recommendation which we consider to be potentially very positive for ethnocultural minorities, is the broader application of mastery learning. There is little doubt that mastery learning techniques, when properly used, can result in very major improvements in performance of weaker students with no reduction in achievement of stronger students.[1] But the crucial factor is whether the techniques are properly applied in a broad sense. This involves more than providing good technical support for teachers and administrators; it implies good management and long-term involvement of affected educators in developing and implementing the system. Provided that mastery learning is well applied, it is our view that adopting this recommendation would be of great benefit to weaker learners; to the extent that certain ethnocultural minorities suffer from special educational problems, they are very likely to benefit from such improvements. Well applied mastery learning does offer the promise of reducing drastically the problems of disadvantaged groups.

The weakest of Radwanski's recommendations is the proposal to adopt province-wide standardized testing. It is weak both because of its general impracticality and because of the likelihood that it will adversely affect ethnocultural groups. Radwanski argues for standardized testing in a very specific context: it is to be diagnostic and should be applied in parallel with use of mastery learning techniques. What he means by using standardized tests diagnostically is not fully clear. Implementing the requisite mastery learning techniques is likely to be a highly complex and dynamic process that is never

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1 A vast research literature continues to be generated on the topic. The classic review of such studies by B. Bloom (1978) remains as the most convincing explanation of mastery learning works.

"complete": reconciling this with a system of "diagnostic" standardized tests is theoretically possible but certainly has never been attempted on a broad scale anywhere in the world. Ontario has taken almost a decade to put in place a relatively anodine form of voluntary testing based on an assessment instrument pool which is still incomplete and far from widely used. The Radwanski proposals are unproven and would require a far greater level of investment of resources than the existing instrument pool. Their feasibility is dubious, and a botched attempt to introduce them could have very negative effects.

If we concede for a moment that some form of standardized testing could be implemented in spite of the doubts raised above, considerable evidence exists that standardized testing has various unwanted side effects and can result in rigidities both in the curriculum and in the teaching process.[1] Radwanski apparently sees this form of testing as a form of quality control. At the same time he wishes to abolish the credit system in high schools and also recommends return to the practice of failing students who do not respond to the mastery learning: failure once again implies repeating a whole year of study rather than individual courses. He appears to imply that standardized tests will be used in deciding every year who will pass or fail. This all adds up to a structure which sounds remarkably like the system which, only a generation ago, meant that high school graduation was reserved for an elite. Coming in a report which condemns "non-standard" English, does not mention ESL courses and fails to acknowledge legitimate concerns of ethnocultural minorities, the implications of a mastery learning system with standardized tests at all levels are downright menacing, even if the author is well-intentioned and thinks that no one will be hurt by his proposals.

The implications of adopting a common program of learning depend upon what is in the curriculum. If the curriculum is rigid and makes no space for legitimate concerns of minorities, such as those sketched in the discussion above, then it could be extremely constraining and "turn off" more youngsters than the present system, no matter what teaching methodologies are applied. In our view the required curriculum proposed by Radwanski is too broad, too inflexible and fails to include components that are vital in shaping a society that is increasingly multicultural and multiracial. On the other hand, since we endorse his proposals for destreaming and use of mastery learning --- which both imply common programs of learning for students --- it is incumbent on us to specify how, in our opinion, they can be made to work. In our view, an adequate definition of

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1 A fine-grained analysis of likely side-effects of different testing options in Ontario is provided by Nagy, Traub and MacRury 1988.

the common core elements should be narrower than those identified by Radwanski, perhaps oriented around basic cognitive skills: a narrower core would permit the very heavy investment in course development required for implementing mastery learning and it would leave greater flexibility for optional studies related to individual needs. This could provide the type of basis Radwanski foresees for concentrating a major portion of school efforts on ensuring that all students receive an adequate grounding in essentials.

The provision of universally available early childhood education might be a mixed blessing: in line with Radwanski's reasoning, it may help prepare some children better for the experience of public schooling but it can also be conducted in a way which tends to blur legitimate cultural differences that are an intrinsic, beneficial part of our society. Ethnocultural differences are sometimes a source of educational problems, but they may also be a rich basis for societal development. Anyone with a commitment to conserving the cultural richness of our country would wish to see early childhood education carried on in an environment which encourages close relationships between home culture and schooling. Built on such a foundation, early childhood education could be a major benefit; but, if it is built on the concept of a unitary curriculum rooted solely in English-speaking values (or, to borrow a phrase from Radwanski, French-speaking values in francophone schools) it could be counterproductive, resulting in a homogenization of culture without necessarily providing the basis for better cognitive development and better preparation for the schooling experience. Early childhood education is not a panacea. Its implications for ethnocultural minorities depend largely upon how it is designed and carried out.

None of the proposals is likely, however, to make a serious dent in the particular problems faced by Native children. What is missing is a recognition that Native culture may require solutions that are elaborated with a greater respect for their autonomy than other Canadians have been willing heretofore to grant them: unless Native schools become a focus for a "counter-culture" which deliberately sets out to create a model of being that is different from mainstream Canada, they are hardly likely to bridge the gap that separates Native Peoples from our own way of life. To a large extent, Native youth have opted out of schooling, proving they have the right to reject our culture. But this right is not enough: they must have something with which to replace it. Neither the Radwanski Report nor any other official report prepared in Ontario has ever come to grips with the dilemma of admitting that the renewal and transmission of Canada's indigenous cultures in some new form is more than an idle dream; it is a prerequisite to overcoming the bottleneck that has paralysed most educational efforts among Native peoples. Native children and youth cannot be educated in schools whose curriculum is

predicated on the assumption that their culture is inferior and should play only a transitional role in facilitating mainstream schooling whose ultimate effect is to eradicate that culture. Creating a new model of schooling based upon Native initiative appears the only means that will put them in a position to adopt parts of mainstream culture on their own terms and in their own way.

Conclusion

Our review of the Radwanski Report has highlighted a major contradiction between the premises of his analyses and the likely impact of his recommendations. Radwanski draws generally erroneous conclusions about ethnocultural matters based upon inadequate research studies unsuited to deal with these issues. In the process he ignores serious educational problems which affect ethnocultural groups. Contrary to his affirmation, these issues are relevant to education on a province-wide basis and, furthermore, are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, he has made a series of proposals which hold the potential for producing great benefits to students of all types, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Because these groups also include disadvantaged ethnocultural minorities, the proposals also hold promise for reducing disadvantages related to ethnicity.

But the promised benefits are not likely to be fully realized if the recommendations are implemented without sensitivity to the concerns of ethnocultural minorities or without inputs from them. In our opinion, Radwanski's report cannot be implemented effectively unless major changes are made. In particular, the proposal for standardized testing needs to be rethought and made manageable, and the proposed common curriculum needs to be made less Anglo-centric and reduced in scope in order to permit greater flexibility for individual student needs, which include ethnocultural needs. Under these conditions, the combination between de-streaming and use of mastery learning techniques focused on important cognitive skills could make a major difference to dropout rates and reduce disadvantage due to factors of ethnicity and immigration.

This critique of the Radwanski Report raises a final question that transcends his work: How is it possible to have a report which deals so superficially with ethnocultural questions? Why were there no other major information sources dealing with ethnicity and school achievement, instead of the two specially-commissioned surveys which were,

in any event, inappropriate for the purpose? The reason is that the Ministry of Education in Ontario has no means for providing ongoing performance data on different ethnocultural groups. Diagnosis of major problems is dependent upon occasional research reports, often initiated by persons outside the Ministry. In our opinion, this reflects both carelessness on the part of our most senior educational authorities and a desire to avoid at all costs raising issues which might be politically sensitive --- even at the price of harming the lives of many students whose problems go unrecognized. So long as the Ministry fails to put in place regular data collection methods which identify major problems of achievement among different ethnic and linguistic groups, Ontario educators can continue to deny the existence of problems which other jursidictions regularly report on as part of their policy-making processes.

This is the unfinished agenda.